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EAST TIMOR

Paramilitary Attacks Jeopardise East Timor's Future

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AI Index: ASA 21/26/99
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Introduction

At least 18 and possibly many more East Timorese have been unlawfully killed by pro-Indonesian paramilitary groups and the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) in East Timor since 5 April 1999. Others have been arbitrarily detained and ill-treated in custody. In actions supported by ABRI, paramilitary groups have intensified attacks against those in favour of independence for East Timor and have threatened, and in some cases attacked, human rights monitors, journalists and humanitarian workers. In some cases ABRI has been present when human rights violations have been committed and has either actively participated in killings and other attacks or has refrained from intervening to prevent such attacks. ABRI is known to have supplied some paramilitary groups with weapons.

There have been repeated calls from human rights groups, including Amnesty International, and members of the international community for the Indonesian Government to control the paramilitaries. The United States and Australian Governments and the European Union (EU) are among those which have called on the Indonesian Government to disarm the paramilitary groups. So far these calls have gone unheeded.

The next three months are a critical time for East Timor's political future. On 21 and 22 April the Indonesian and Portugese Governments will meet to agree on an autonomy package which will be voted on by East Timorese in a ballot in July 1999. All the indications suggest however, that the upsurge in paramilitary activity is deliberately aimed at destabilising conditions in East Timor, undermining the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the East Timor problem. Urgent measures are needed to check the cycle of

violence in order to bring about the conditions which are necessary to ensure the July ballot can take place in a free and open atmosphere.

In view of the deteriorating situation in East Timor, Amnesty International is urging that:

- the paramilitary groups in East Timor are immediately disarmed and disbanded;
- UN human rights monitors are immediately sent to East Timor with a mandate to investigate and report human rights abuses;
- full and impartial investigations are conducted into human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups including investigations into the direct involvement or failure of ABRI to prevent these attacks;
- all members of paramilitary groups and the Indonesian armed forces involved in human rights violations are brought to justice;
- full access to all areas of East Timor is permitted to domestic and international human rights monitors, humanitarian organizations and to members of the media, and guarantees are provided for their safety against threats or attacks by paramilitary groups or ABRI.

KEYWORDS: MASS KILLING1 / EXTRA-JUDICIAL EXECUTIONS1 / PARAMILITARIES1 / MILITARY / CIVIL DEFENCE / NON-GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES / NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS /

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Paramilitary attacks jeopardise East Timor's future

Introduction

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The civilian and paramilitary groups

Various armed civilian and paramilitary groups of East Timorese have operated alongside ABRI in East Timor for many years. Trained civilians - *rakyat terlatih (ratih)* - form part of the civil defence in East Timor. They are employed by the Indonesian Department of Home Affairs but trained by and seconded to the military. They include groups known as "people's resistance" - *wanra* - and "public security" - *kamra*.

In addition there are East Timorese militia groups in most of East Timor's districts which have also operated for a number of years. They include Halilintar - in Bobonaro; Tim Alfa - in Los Palos; Makikit in Viqueque; Tim Saka in Baucau; Sakuna in Same; Railakan in Ermera; Ainaro Team in Ainaro; Suai Team in Suai; Sakunar Team; Morok Manatuto Team in Manututo and Liquisa Team. These units wear military uniforms and are armed by ABRI. According to documents believed to have been leaked from the Indonesian military, as of August 1998 there were around 1,200 people recruited into these paramilitary units.[1] The role of these units has been to conduct operations with ABRI against the East Timorese National Liberation Army (*Falintil).* ABRI has recently claimed that some of these groups - such as Tim Saka and Makikit - have been disbanded. This has never been verifiable and, at least in some regions, the groups are known to be still operating.

Since the mid 1990's, other groups have emerged which ostensibly operate independently of ABRI. They have played a role in gathering intelligence on and intimidating pro-independence supporters. The largest and most notorious of these groups is Gadapaksi.

In a new and disturbing development, a number of new paramilitary groups have been formed since December 1998. The timing of their establishment coincided with an increase in the momentum towards finding a political solution to East Timor's future. Prominent among the new groups are *Besi Merah Putih* (The Iron Red and White [referring to the colours of the

[1]The documents, variously dated from November 1997 to August 1998, are believed to be from the Udayana Regional Military Command (Kodam) which covers East Timor. They provide a detailed breakdown of ABRI's strength in East Timor.

Indonesian flag] - BMP), *Mati Hidup Demi Integrasi*, (Live or Die with Integration, *Mahidi)*; *Kelompok Naga Merah* (Red Dragon Group), and *Aitarak* (Thorn). Portrayed by their own leaders and by the Indonesian authorities as having emerged from an East Timorese initiative to defend pro-integrationists against attacks by pro-independence groups, the groups are nonetheless armed, supported and used by ABRI against supporters of independence for East Timor.

Since late 1998, these paramilitary groups have been actively targeting pro-independence supporters through intimidation, house to house searches, destruction of houses, arbitrary detentions, ill-treatment, rape and unlawful killings. Human rights monitors report that individuals detained by the paramilitary groups are beaten, kicked, hit with rifle butts, machetes, rice pestles and chains. Intimidation by the groups has resulted in thousands of internally displaced persons. Some of those fleeing are believed to have been pressured into joining the paramilitary groups, which have reportedly used coercion to obtain recruits.

The deployment of these new groups has reversed the relative political openness which had existed in East Timor since President Habibie came to power in May 1998. Many pro-independence supporters have gone into hiding and residents in areas under extensive military and paramilitary control are displaying the red and white Indonesian flag for fear of reprisals if they are perceived as supporters of independence. Since early April 1999 the level of fear in Dili, the capital of East Timor, has intensified amidst rumours that paramilitary units intend to hunt down independence supporters. Members of the umbrella organization which represents the political wing of the opposition to Indonesia's occupation of East Timor - *Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Timorense*, (National Council for Timorese Resistance, CNRT) - and their families have received warnings that they are on death lists.

Human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have come under increased pressure from paramilitary units in recent weeks and there are now serious fears for their safety. Phone tapping and surveillance of human rights NGO offices has increased in the last few months and telephone death threats have been received. NGOs have also been prevented by military and paramilitary units from travelling to investigate particular human rights violations. In the last week, rumours have been circulating in East Timor that paramilitary units intend to attack the offices of human rights NGOs in Dili. Foreign and domestic journalists have also been subjected to threats, intimidation and physical attacks by the paramilitary units and there are fears for the safety of those who continue to report on events from East Timor.

The paramilitary units and ABRI

Despite clear evidence of its support for the paramilitary units, ABRI continues to deny any responsibility for the actions of the groups. Human rights monitors however have documented the direct involvement of ABRI in paramilitary activities which are frequently carried out jointly with ABRI (chronology of main attacks can be found below).

In some cases ABRI has been present when human rights violations have been committed and has either actively participated in killings and other violations or has taken no action to prevent them. ABRI posts have also been used to detain individuals arrested by the paramilitaries. ABRI's complicity is also evident by its failure to act on threats against East Timorese human rights monitors. No action has been taken by the authorities to investigate reported human rights violations by the paramilitaries, despite a commitment from ABRI commander General Wiranto that all those in East Timor who have committed violations of the law will be brought to justice.

The Liquisa killings

Since 5 April 1999 there have been reports that at least 18 and possibly as many as 69 have been killed in attacks by paramilitary groups including in two separate attacks near the town of Liquisa to the west of the East Timorese capital, Dili.

On 4 April, a confrontation broke out between BMP and pro-independence youths in the village of Dato, around three kilometres from the centre of Liquisa. The confrontation occurred after BMP had attempted to arrest a local pro-independence supporter. The following morning, BMP returned to Dato and were joined by members of ABRI including from a territorial battalion, BTT 143 and Sub-district Military Command (Koramil) Maubara. Shots were fired at civilians killing five people and wounding at least eight others.

Following the events in Dato, around 2,000 people fled and sought refuge in the grounds of the Liquisa church. The next day, 6 April, members of the police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) from Dili gathered around the church claiming to be there to protect the parish priest and those seeking refuge. However, at around 1 pm the members of Brimob began firing tear gas canisters into the church grounds. They also fired shots into the air. As people left the compound to escape the tear gas they were attacked by members of the BMP who were armed with automatic rifles, machetes and other sharp weapons.

The number of people killed on 6 April remains unclear. Estimates by East Timorese human rights groups vary from 30 to 57 people. ABRI, on the other hand, claim that only five people died on the day and that two others have subsequently died from their injuries. ABRI has not released the names of the seven, nor has it returned the bodies to their families. ABRI has asserted that the assault on the church was justified on the grounds that two weapons belonging to *Falintil* were found in the priest's house.

Liquisa is now under the control of ABRI and BMP. The military authorities have already destroyed vital forensic evidence in the church grounds. Bullet holes in the priest's house have reportedly been filled in and the blood has been washed away.

Although some journalists and human rights monitors were initially able to go to Liquisa and an Australian diplomatic mission was also permitted access briefly, access is now being denied to the town including to organizations providing humanitarian and medical assistance to the victims. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is among the organizations which have attempted to visit the town but have had to leave on two occasions because of threats to their security.

Falintil abuses and paramilitary reprisals

In response to the killings in Liquisa, the jailed President of the CNRT, Xanana Gusmão issued a statement in which he stated the need for East Timorese to defend themselves against attacks and called on *Falintil* to resume its mission to defend the people of East Timor. A ceasefire had been called by *Falintil* while the UN sponsored negotiations were reaching their conclusion. CNRT has stressed that despite the statement it remains committed to reconciliation, dialogue and the on-going peace process.

ABRI has claimed that an attack by *Falintil* took place on 12 April on a vehicle carrying civilians and security forces in Cailaco Sub-district, Bobonaro District and that two men were reportedly killed - a senior civil servant from Bobonaro and a member of ABRI. Lack of access has meant that human rights monitors have not been able to independently confirm that the attack was carried out by *Falintil.*

In any case, the killings provoked another attack by a joint team from the Cailaco Sub-District Military Headquarters and *Halilintar*, the local paramilitary unit. According to reports received from local human rights groups, at least five people who were taken into custody by the joint team were extrajudicially executed.

Confirmation of the events is proving difficult including *Falintil's* involvement. Amnesty International condemns the unlawful killing of civilians by armed opposition groups and is urging the CNRT to take measures to ensure that *Falintil* acts in accordance with international humanitarian law. Equally, Amnesty International condemns extrajudicial executions carried out by paramilitary units and ABRI in revenge for possible attacks by *Falintil.*

Chronology of recent attacks by paramilitary groups

The following reports have been compiled by various sources in East Timor, including human rights organizations.

- On 27 December 1998, a group from Gadapaksi, accompanied by soldiers from a Territorial Battalion (BTT 143) and Koramil 03 Maubara arrested and ill-treated four men in Vatuboro village, Liquisa. The four men were released shortly afterwards but

Gadapaksi later returned to the village and conducted house to house searches of pro-independence supporters.

- On 2 January 1999, *Mahidi* and soldiers from Koramil Ainaro, Ainaro Sub-district, arbitrarily detained seven students from the University of East Timor. While in custody, the seven were reportedly threatened that they would be shot. One of the students was punched and kicked.

- On 3 January 1999, two men were shot dead by *Mahidi* in Ainaro, south of Dili. Tensions in Ainaro following attempts to establish *Mahidi* posts in every village led to a violent confrontation between pro-independence supporters and *Mahidi.* On 3 January, pro-independence youths went to *Mahidi's* headquarters to make peace. Despite being unarmed the group was shot at by several *Mahidi* members. Two men, Julio, 22 and Reinaldo, 23 were killed and four others were wounded.

- In late January 1999, *Mahidi* killed four people in Zumalai Sub-district, Covalima District. Fernando Cardoso was shot dead on 24 January by *Mahidi* and a joint military operation of marines, infantry and Special Forces Command (Kopassus) officers. The following day, three other people, Olandino Pereira, Angelina de Jesus, who was reportedly pregnant, and Luis Pereira, 15, were shot dead. Human rights monitors claim that members of ABRI were also present on 25 January when the three people were killed. In a media interview, the leader of *Mahidi* admitted carrying out the attack on what it described as a "rebel post" and that the three people were killed by *Mahidi* during the attack.[2]

- There are unconfirmed reports that in February and March, *Besi Merah Putih* (BMP), Koramil Maubara and BTT 143 Maubara, shot at people who are believed to be unarmed and carried out arbitrary detentions in Guico village, Maubara. On 15 February several villagers, including a heavily pregnant woman, were arbitrarily detained by a joint team of BMP, Koramil 03 Maubara and BTT 143 Maubara. The detainees were held at BTT 143 post. Most were released shortly afterwards but human rights monitors claim that the pregnant woman was not and subsequently gave birth in custody. On 23 February, a pre-arranged meeting was held in Guico to resolve growing conflict between pro-independence and pro-integration supporters. BMP arrived at the meeting with Koramil 03 Maubara and BTT 143. Koramil soldiers reportedly opened fire outside the meeting wounding four villagers, including one who was shot in the forehead. Human rights monitors have been prevented from travelling to the village to investigate the reports.

[2]BBC World Service Radio Interview, 5 February 1999.

- In March members of BMP surrounded a convent in Maubara, west of Dili and effectively held a group of nuns inside the convent captive, accusing them of supporting independence because they were providing food and medicines to villagers fleeing intimidation by the paramilitary units. Some of the villagers had fled to avoid being forced to join BMP. The siege of the mission lasted several days during which BMP issued a death threat against the nuns.

- On 5 April, Alipiu Maya Moniz, a civil servant from Suai, in Covalima District, was arrested by a civilian militia based at the Suai Sub-district Military Command. He was released on 11 April apparently after having been beaten in custody. Alipiu Maya Moniz is a supporter of independence and a human rights defender.

- On 10 April, Antonio de Lima, a member of the regional parliament and a pro-independence supporter, was shot in Ermera, south west of Dili. Police claimed that Antonio de Lima was shot by soldiers from the Ermera District Miliary Command (Kodim) as he was preparing to throw a grenade at a Kodim patrol. This has been denied by human rights monitors.

- On 11 April, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Bishop Belo, was in a convoy of vehicles that was attacked by the BMP. The Bishop was travelling to Dili, having celebrated a mass in Liquisa. The convoy, which was under police escort, also included journalists and humanitarian workers. According to reports the convoy came under attack by around 30 members of the BMP who threw stones and pounded the vehicles with pieces of wood and iron bars. The police escorts were reported to have taken no action to prevent the attack.

Appendix

List of East Timorese reported killed in recent attacks by paramilitary units and ABRI - April 1999

People killed after shooting in Liquisa on 5 April 1999

Felix, 27, from Dato Village
Francisco, 25, from Vatuvou
Julio, 25, from Dato Village
Laurindo, 40, from Liquisa
Paulino Ribeiro, 28, from Manumeta Village

People killed in Liquisa Church grounds on 6 April 1999

The following is a list of people reported killed by several sources as of 15 April 1999. This list will be updated as more information becomes available.

Antonio dos Santos, 24
Agostinho Darulete, 40
Augusto Mauzinho, 30
Bendito da Costa Hornai
Elidio dos Santos, 20
Felisberto Antero
Felisberto dos Santos
Francisco Ediri
Herminio dos Santos, 35
Jacinta da Conceicao, 34 [f]
Jacinto da Costa, 40, head of Dato Village.
Julio Venancio
Laurindo da Costa Goncalves, 42
Leogildo da Costa Hornai, 18
Manuel Lisboa, 40
Paulo Fatima, 48
Tomas de Jesus, 26
Victor da Costa, 30

Other people known to have been killed on 12 April

Antonio de Lima, shot in Ermera District
Antonio Soares, 38, school teacher from Meligo village, shot in Cailaco, Bobonaro District
Joao, 35, school teacher, from Dahudu, shot in Cailaco